# Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Peripateticism

In the summer of 2007, Alasdair MacIntyre strode to a podium at Britain's most troubled university. "Before I even begin, let me say that among the elements in the conference's title is the word resistance and I've been asked by the union to talk ... about the boycott which they are asking faculty and others to observe over a variety of functions because of the failure of London Metropolitan University to negotiate adequately with or to recognize the union adequately and to use this to cut jobs. I want to say that this is a form of resistance that I think everyone ought to agree with."[1]

Almost forty years before, when he moved from the UK to USA, British universities were altogether more exclusive institutions. Then, it was affluent students, largely straight from "public", fee-paying schools, mostly male and almost exclusively white, who resisted the new, academic authority to which they were subject. MacIntyre understood them well, since he came from a similar background and had himself become a Marxist and member of the Communist Party of Great Britain when an undergraduate. This was a further twenty years earlier, after the Second World War's defeat of fascism, and after the beginning of the Cold War between the communist East and capitalist West. Politics was then an utterly serious business, in a threatening new world of nuclear weapons. He had worked as a political activist, as an academic, and for the Workers' Education Association, teaching older, employed students who lacked the privileges of those brought up to enter Oxford or Cambridge, the LSE or Essex.

In 2007, MacIntyre walked into the industrial conflict of a very different university. It was, and remains, a university with Britain's largest proportion of black and minority ethnic students, many of whom have to work full-time in order to try to study full-time. It was a university to which he would return many times, both to teach and research, unpaid, flying across the Atlantic and staying in London, all at his own expense. His moral commitments remained as they had been over forty years earlier.

In the audience on this first visit was the leading theorist of Britain's Socialist Workers Party, which occupied the position on Britain's far left that the Communist Party had once enjoyed. MacIntyre had himself been one of the group's leading members, long before. He, Alex Callinicos now alleged, had deserted the left. The deserter could take that head-on:

> I don't know how to [change the social system] but then I don't think that you do either, and I think it's very important that if you don't know how to do it you shouldn't talk as though you do. That's to say, it would be indeed wonderful if we had a theory and a practice related to contemporary capitalist social order which would do for us what Marxist parties once hoped to do — but we don't.[2]

This problem had been at the forefront of MacIntyre's mind for forty years. When he left Essex for Massachusetts, he had indeed flown away from the British left. He had never joined the American left, and he had never joined any American political party. Merely criticizing capitalist social order was a world away from changing it. Indeed, mere demonstration of dissent seemed a displacement activity by those unable even to theorize how change might be enacted. Like them, MacIntyre wanted a theory and a practice related to contemporary capitalism which would do what he had once hoped would be done by Marxist parties; unlike the most committed of them, he, after much revolutionary theorizing and attempted practice, had acknowledged that no group could do what he still thought it would be indeed wonderful to do.

In America, MacIntyre tried to work through the problem — not just with contemporary capitalist social order, which he thought obvious, but with the theory and practice of those who wished for its replacement. What was most obviously wrong with Marxism was that it lacked a moral theory of its own. When Marxists had to decide what was to be done, and to justify their actions to themselves and others, they had to resort either to simulacra of Kantianism or "a means-end morality" that MacIntyre often characterized as "a crude utilitarianism".[3] This could be blamed on Marx, who had impatiently walked away from philosophy before he had a theory adequate to any revolutionary

practice. Therefore, if there was to be any hope of doing what Marxist parties had once hoped to do, then what had first to be done was to make good Marx's error and return to serious philosophizing. In America, MacIntyre became a full-time philosopher.

Over a decade passed before MacIntyre, in 1981, presented *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. The focus of his critique had hardly shifted but had sharpened upon the modern moral philosophy that legitimated capitalism. Legitimation occurred by simultaneously maintaining incompatible moral theories. The moral ideals of utility and freedom that had divided Marxists had first divided modernity, between the utilitarianism that justified the bureaucratic state and the rights that justified capitalist competition and property. The interminability of modern moral debate, and consequent incoherence of modern morality, was due to modernity's social structure. A similar incoherence afflicted modern social science. To this extent, he took himself to still be following Marx. The third of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* recognized

> that the Enlightenment's mechanistic account of human action included both a thesis about the predictability of human behavior and a thesis about the appropriate ways to manipulate human behavior. As an observer, if I know the relevant laws governing the behavior of others, I can whenever I observe that the antecedent conditions have been fulfilled predict the outcome. As an agent, if I know these laws, I can whenever I can contrive the fulfilment of the same antecedent conditions produce the outcome. What Marx understood was that such an agent is forced to regard his own actions quite differently from the behavior of those whom he is manipulating. For the behavior of the manipulated is being contrived in accordance with his intentions, reasons and purposes; intentions, reasons and purposes which he is treating, at least while he is engaged in such manipulation, as exempt from the laws which govern the behavior of the manipulated.[4]

The pity was that, having recognized this, Marx abandoned philosophy and attempted to make a comprehensive social and historical science out of political economy. With such a science, Marxists would deceive themselves into thinking that they could use state power to manipulate their way to communism. The end, they supposed, justified their means and, of course, their power. On the analysis of both MacIntyre and the SWP, what Stalinists had instead created was a state capitalism.

MacIntyre's analysis of modernity, both Western and Eastern, criticized not only workers' exploitation but also their institutionalized manipulation. In this, he continued the line of thought that he had developed with the likes of E.P. Thompson and Charles Taylor in what history knows as Britain's First New Left.[5] What such anti-Stalinist, humanist Marxists criticized as workers' systemic alienation from their own activity, he now attacked as managerial manipulation warranted by the contradictions of modern moral and social theory. The problem was no longer reducible to an impersonal capitalist mode of production, as the subject for scientific study by what had become Marxist theory. Ethically, it was a problem of identifying ideas capable of motivating resistance to institutions that empower some to dominate and manipulate others. In the Stalinist East, Marxist ideas had led to all power being institutionalized in the party and state. In the more economically successful West, ideas of private enterprise, property and rights had institutionalized power in private corporations. In both, workers were demoralized and manipulated by professional managers.

Capitalist modernity would remain the object of MacIntyre's critique as much as ever. His great difference from the revolutionary left was that he did not share its belief that the French Revolution, which it supposed had instituted a permanent change from feudal to capitalist rule, or the Russian Revolution, which it supposed had instituted a change from class to classless rule, provided any model for the successful institutionalization of a liberatory socialism. Without abandoning hope for some such change, he accepted that there was no adequate reason to suppose that it would occur of historical necessity or that it could occur by substituting one group of rulers for another. What the experience of twentieth-century Russia and China, and of mid-twentieth-century British and European social democracy, seemed to evince was that the bureaucratic state was as crucial to maintaining exploitation and manipulation as was capital's private ownership. What the subsequent

failure of those revolutionary and reformist, socialist experiments suggested was that, even if the state were to be directed by some socialist party, that would not suffice to actualize socialism's theoretical ideal.

If any hope for any kind of revolutionary change for the better were to be sustained, then serious theorizing was necessary. Such theorizing must try to comprehend real social practice, in a way that what MacIntyre criticized as the Enlightenment project in moral theory failed to do. What Bentham said of the purposive pursuit of welfare was fine, in theory. What Kant said of the moral obligatoriness of treating everyone as an end in themselves was excellent, so long as one was prepared to isolate moral ideals from empirical reality. As he would later make explicit,[6] MacIntyre's critique of the Enlightenment's moral theories was not with their morality but with their detachment of philosophical theory from everyday practice. In Marx's term, his critique was of them as ideology. In practice, they functioned to legitimate an order to which they failed to correspond. For intellectuals, they became the heart of an otherwise heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions. For MacIntyre, they are the sigh of the oppressed creature. As expressed in the language of human rights, they are the last utopia to be unmasked. What, for him, remains the greatest hope expressed by Marx was of a different kind. It was the hope to theorize practice so realistically that the theory really was, is and will be enacted. Marx's most genuinely revolutionary insight was that the standpoint of modern "civil society cannot be transcended, and its limitations adequately understood and criticized, by theory alone, that is, by theory divorced from practice, but only by a particular kind of practice, practice informed by a particular kind of theory rooted in that same practice".[7] The task MacIntyre set himself in walking away from the British left to the American academy was to try to think through what such praxis might be.

*After Virtue* shocked MacIntyre's audiences with its journey all the way back to ancient Aristotle. Only relatively less shocking was his suggestion that the alternative terminus was not Marx but Nietzsche. Unlike Marx, Nietzsche placed no hope in social revolution. What MacIntyre valued in Nietzsche was the radicalism of his philosophical critique of all modern hopes, including those for socialism. If there was no other ground for hope than those offered by modern moral and social theorists, then no will to truth could be any more than an agonistic will to power. Indeed, behind modern ideologies and institutions, modern social reality seemed to be as Nietzsche described the human condition. If one were to continue looking for hope after Nietzsche's devastating deconstruction of its modern forms, then one would have to look elsewhere. Having done so, MacIntyre announced that hope could still be found in Aristotelian ethics. In *After Virtue*, his caveat was that what he called Aristotle's metaphysical biology had to be discarded in order to properly focus on what is of continuing value in Aristotle's philosophy of practice. Thus trimmed, Aristotelianism's conceptual scheme involves

> a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature. Ethics is the science which is to enable men to understand how they make the transition from the former state to the latter.... The precepts which enjoin the various virtues and prohibit the vices which are their counterparts instruct us how to move from potentiality to act, how to realize our true nature and to reach our true end. To defy them will be to be frustrated and incomplete, to fail to achieve that good of rational happiness which it is peculiarly ours as a species to pursue. The desires and emotions which we possess are to be put in order and educated by the use of such precepts and by the cultivation of those habits of action which the study of ethics prescribes; reason instructs us both as to what our true end is and as to how to reach it.[8]

*After Virtue* identified a number of ways in which this scheme has been retheorized through western history. It then theorized the scheme in contemporary terms. One step was psychological, in showing how it was possible to interpret and narrate one's sense of identity, one's various aims, interests and ambitions and one's experiences in terms of that scheme. Another step was historical. Here, MacIntyre refused to imitate Marx and Hegel in theorizing history as a teleological totality of progress. Instead, he reflected on the changing Aristotelian tradition of ethical theorizing about social

practice. It was this second-order theorizing that would most excite the critical faculties of most other professional philosophers, and that would preoccupy MacIntyre in his next two books: *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*. Each of these is an important work in the philosophy of the history of philosophy. Each says much, philosophically, about practice. Even so, neither book focussed upon what was essential to his original task. Indeed, in elaborating on virtues and vices, on movement from potentiality to act, and on reasoning about action and the ordering of ends, he argued for the historical and philosophical significance of Thomas Aquinas's synthesis of Aristotelianism with Augustinian Christianity. Still more notoriously, he practiced what he theorized in becoming a Roman Catholic. So far as politics and ethics were concerned, this digression allowed political philosophers to categorize him as a communitarian critic of Rawls' liberalism and moral philosophers to categorize him as a virtue ethicist.

Having, in *After Virtue*, identified his philosophical position within a longer Aristotelian tradition, the two subsequent books distinguish this tradition from rivals. Incisive though those these exercises in intellectual history are, they are philosophically complex in at least two ways.

One complication is due to his admission, in *After Virtue*, that "a tradition is sustained and advanced by its own internal arguments and conflicts".[9] If *Whose Justice?* tried to establish that the most plausible kind of Aristotelianism derived from the work of Aquinas, *Three Rival Versions* admitted that there have been incompatible variants even of a specifically Thomistic Aristotelianism. In further books — *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, 1999, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue, 1913–1922*, 2005, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition*, 2009, and his contributions to *Intractable Disputes about the Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics*, 2009 — his principal concern was to elaborate the case for his unconventional version of Thomistic Aristotelianism, as an undogmatic kind of intellectual enquiry into social practice. The earliest, *Dependent Rational Animals*, is certainly the one that has continued to have the widest appeal, in part because its concern with Thomism's internal arguments and conflicts is less apparent there than are his points against non-Thomistic Aristotelians and non-Aristotelian philosophers. Nonetheless, the book renounces his previous dismissal of Aristotle's metaphysical biology in order to elaborate a Thomistic naturalism that is at once teleological and sociological. This naturalism is incompatible with the dualistic personalism that allowed Jacques Maritain — one of two philosophers for whom MacIntyre had expressed "the greatest respect and from whom I have learned most",[10] as an Aristotelian — to theorize human rights and facilitate Catholicism's mid-twentieth-century accommodation to liberalism.[11] Having abandoned Marxism because its theoretical lacunae rendered its attempted challenge to capitalism and liberal ideology inadequate, he had to adopt novel positions regarding Aquinas and Aristotle in order to sustain a challenge to capitalism and liberalism in their names.

If this theoretical complication was something entirely new in MacIntyre's philosophy, the second and more elemental complication in his account of Aristotelianism as a tradition has clear origins in his earlier Marxism. As a Marxist, he was always keen to emphasize that in Marx and Marxism which resisted theory's reification from labor and action. Socialist consciousness, he wrote, is of work's potential to remake external nature "into the image of man by means of art and science".[12] Against attempts to subject artists and scientists to state diktat, he argued that "art and science move by their own laws of development".[13] Marxism, he had wanted to argue, was, at its best, the coherent theorization of shared human practice that no capitalist ideology could be. This was a fine thought, and a fine theoretical aspiration, but one that proved impossible to justify. Now, with Aristotelianism, he had another go. His paradigmatic Aristotelian is not a professional theorist but an artist, scientist or some other kind of worker, or the fulfiller of other social roles, who understands her own good to be realized through such fulfilment insofar as the roles are ones that allow her to manage her own actions and, therefore, to achieve excellence in their performance.[14] Certainly, this idea of personal virtue and of its necessary social conditions is recognizable in Aristotle, certainly it was rendered less elitist by Aquinas, and certainly MacIntyre's adaption of their arguments to his purposes is, or would be, contested by most students of both Aristotle and Aquinas. As is now acknowledged by most students of his own work, the idea combines elements from Aristotle, Aquinas and Marx. It does so

in order to try to pick up from where, following the "Theses on Feuerbach", Marx abandoned philosophy.

The first step that *After Virtue* took in retheorizing Aristotelianism's conceptual scheme in modern and post-Marxist terms was neither psychological nor historical. Rather, "the first stage requires a background account of what I shall call a practice".[15] This basic step was sociological and socialist, or, as American political philosophers preferred, communitarian. MacIntyre's objection to liberalism was to Kant, Mill and Locke long before it was to anything written by Rawls (of whom he had been an early, appreciative reader[16]), and it was more to the Enlightenment's project of high moral theory than to analytic philosophers' attempts to salvage something from that project's failure. Even so, that objection was indeed to the individualist presuppositions of a long liberal tradition that Rawls had himself retheorized. MacIntyre's starting point was not the metaphysically or hypothetically abstracted, sociologically and psychologically incredible, individual of classical and Kantian liberalism. Nor was it the social totality of what became Marxist theory, capable of causally determining individuals' behavior. Rather, it was what he called *a* practice.

Ideas of shared practice had informed the most important moves in philosophy in the decades following the shock of the First World War. Nietzsche's denial of moral rationality was extended to the irrationality of states. Morally and politically, Europe's Age of Reason was clearly over. In Germany, Heidegger made extraordinary moves in rethinking what Aristotle said of being, time and individuals' thought and actions apart from his compatriots' neo-Kantianism. In Britain, Wittgenstein increasingly contemplated thought and action as matters of custom, habit and rule-following. Philosophers generally despaired of states as instruments of their rational ideals and policies. Many who understood why European liberalism had been defeated, but who still aspired to change the world for the better, looked to Marx. When one of those came to despair also of Marx, seeing neither the atomized individual not the social totality as an adequate starting point, he instead took as a more modest starting point the philosophical idea of shared practice.

A practice, on MacIntyre's account, is distinguished by a good which its participants characteristically try to achieve. It is in respect of this shared goal that participants reason with one another about their actions as practitioners. Whilst not determining individuals' intentions, reasons or purposes, each practice gives individuals reasons for action. This was not a surprising thought for analytic philosophers, one of whom, Peter Geach — the other philosopher for whom MacIntyre expressed great respect and gratitude — reinstilled objective, attributive meaning to linguistic usage of "good". Even so, such thoughts appeared to represent a retreat from politics and purposiveness. If they had any political implication it was conservative: since rational action is grounded in customary rules, custom should be conserved. This rationale was reversed by MacIntyre's introduction of Aristotle's teleological explanation of action by reference to the goods that it was intended to actualize. Whereas Aristotle had discriminated between the instrumental function of production and the rational purposiveness of action or *praxis*, MacIntyre generalized about a multiplicity of productive practices, retaining Aristotle's judgement that the highest, most architectonic practice was politics.

Shared practices, on MacIntyre's account, are the schools of the virtues. They educate individuals into the qualities that enable them to get along with others and into standards of excellence that enable them to actualize their own good, as social beings, as well as good products. Practices are the ways in which individuals are socialized into reasoning with others, into recognizing goods greater than that of satisfying their own immediate desires, and into working with others for the sake of those common goods. By tutoring individuals in the idea of goods greater than themselves, social practices endow individuals' actions with a sense of purposiveness and meaning that can furnish their understanding of themselves, their past actions and future intentions, with a narrative unity that is communicable to, and recognizable by, others.

What gives a sharply and distinctively critical edge to MacIntyre's concept of social practices is his clear juxtaposition of practices to institutions. This is what his current Aristotelianism most importantly owes to his past Marxism. Unlike Marx's supposedly scientific juxtaposition of labour to capital, MacIntyre's juxtaposition is expressly ethical. Whereas the young Marx complained that

capital's employment of labour alienated workers' from that productive activity which is most essentially human, the mature MacIntyre protests that corporate institutions' domination of purposive practices denies practitioners rational, co-operative and ethically educative direction of their own actions. It is this juxtaposition that most clearly reverses the conservative, rule-following rationale of what is more familiarly said of practice and tradition.

> Practices must not be confused with institutions. Chess, physics and medicine are practices; chess clubs, laboratories, universities and hospitals are institutions. Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with ... external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions — and consequently of the goods external to the goods internal to the practices in question — that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential function of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions.[17]

For most chess players, physicists and medics, most of the time, all may feel fine. After all, if any practice is to progress toward its distinctive good, it requires organization or institutionalization. So long as the chess club, laboratory, university or hospital enables them to pursue the good internal to chess, physics or medicine, then even great inequalities in the distribution of money, power and status between nurses, trainee doctors and senior consultants may be justified by reasoning about pursuit of their shared good as participants in the practice. So long as the senior managers of a university or hospital allow for pursuit of that good, allow the physicists or medics to reason how best to pursue it, and allow such reasoning to, at least, affect their own decision-making about how to distribute resources, then all may indeed be fine. Conversely, insofar as those managers allow their decision-making to be determined by other considerations, or by other individuals or institutions with greater money, power or status and with no part in the practices they rule, then practitioners and managers will conflict.

It was such a conflict into which MacIntyre walked in addressing the 2009 conference. Even so, it was fought between rival institutions. What he supported was the demand of one institution, the University and College Union, to be properly recognized and negotiated with by another, the university. On the virtues of this form of resistance, by a labor union in industrial conflict with a corporate employer, he and the SWP could agree. Indeed, once the university management had terminated all lectureships in philosophy, history and a few other disciplines, it made redundant the SWP member who was the leading, surviving UCU activist. MacIntyre would also agree with the SWP that such resistance should be informed by aims additional to the defence of jobs and incomes. Here, though, they would disagree about what those aims should be. For one, the aim is to gain recruits with whom to build the party, on the supposition that this is the means to revolution; for MacIntyre, the aim is to defend personal vocations, educative disciplines, and the pursuit of common goods.

Out of the 2007 conference emerged two new institutions. One was an International Society for MacIntyrean Enquiry, in which MacIntyre himself plays no part. It was formed by conferees from the political left, right and center, from universities across Europe and America, and from departments of philosophy, politics, sociology and what has become the distinct academic discipline of theorizing management. Each of these disciplines may, like physics, be understood as a distinct practice. A major concern of conferees' was to continue debating the implications and applications of MacIntyre's juxtaposition of institutions to practices. Creation of their own institution facilitated their cooperative, international and interdisciplinary work, which continues.[18]

The second institution has a similar aim.[19] Joined by MacIntyre, the Centre for Contemporary Aristotelian Studies in Ethics and Politics has been based at the troubled university. His research project there was into "common goods and political reasoning". His express aim was

> to complete what has been an ongoing project concerned with Aquinas's conception of the common good of political societies, as he developed it from Aristotle's account of the good of political community, and with whether and in what ways this conception might find application in the politics of modern societies. A major aim of the study is to identify the different types and styles of political reasoning that are at home in contemporary politics in advanced societies and to compare them with the type and style of reasoning which is needed, if one is to identify and achieve the common goods of political societies.

The conclusions he anticipated were

> that the institutional prerequisites for effective political reasoning aimed at achieving the common good of political societies are not just different from, but incompatible with the institutional structures of the modern state and of the advanced economies with which the activities of the modern state are increasingly integrated.[20]

What became *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* achieves all this and far more besides. In many ways, the 2016 book marks his return to the original task and ethical argument of *After Virtue.* Now, however, he considers it an Aristotelian insight "that it is through conflict and sometimes only through conflict that we learn what our ends and purposes are", whilst repeating "that moral education goes on and ... the virtues come to be valued and redefined" under conditions of conflict.[21] As anticipated, it turns out that his Thomistically Aristotelian conception of the political good cannot find application within the electoral politics or bureaucratic institutions of modern states. For this reason, it makes little sense to locate his type of political reasoning anywhere along liberal democracy's political spectrum — left, right or center.

This does not entail that his kind of political reasoning can have no contemporary application. To the contrary, he restates his academically notorious proposition that such reasoning is institutionalizable within certain local communities, citing as examples, Thorupstrand, a Danish fishing village, and Monte Azul, a Brazilian *favela* or slum.[22] These are political societies in the sense that they are rationally run by their participants in pursuit of discursively ordered common goods, conducive to the flourishing of those inhabitants. Such communities differ in scale, in their lack of military defence, and in other ways, from those states over the government of which parties of left and right contend.

*Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* concludes by exploring the political reasoning exemplified in the decisions and actions of four individuals: Vasily Grossman, a Soviet writer, Sandra Day O'Connor, a conservative Supreme Court Justice, C. L. R. James, a Trotskyist in Trinidad, America and Britain, and Denis Faul, a Catholic priest who mediated between state and rebels in The Troubles endured by Northern Ireland. It is in these various narratives that MacIntyre most closely analyzes types and styles of political reasoning which have been sustained, commendably, within modern societies.

The longest narrative is that recounted of Grossman; the shortest, that of O'Connor. What is likely to be most striking to an American reader is the extent to which MacIntyre defends the USSR against Grossman and the extent to which he criticizes O'Connor for her unquestioning attitude toward American institutions. Whilst unstintingly critical of Stalin, of "Stalinist Russia", *and* of the later USSR, he applauds the insistence of "Victor Serge, custodian of the ideals of 1917", that Bolshevism "could have developed very differently, that there was no inevitability in the move from Lenin to Stalin".[23] Conversely, he himself insists against O'Connor

> that the United States is in fact governed by economic, financial, political, and media elites who determine the peculiarly limited set of alternatives between which voters are allowed to choose in state and federal elections, that money functions in American political life, so that the United States is in some respects not a democracy, but a plutocracy, and that the United States in recent decades has been a too often destructive force in world affairs.[24]

He judges O'Connor to have been incapable of entertaining such thoughts because they are precluded by the unquestioned presuppositions into which she was socialized, and judges her incapable of questioning her presuppositions because they belong to a tradition of American conservatism committed to "a **false opposition between abstract reasoning on the one hand and reckoning with the particularities of social life on the other**".[25] What enabled Grossman and James to put their own beliefs and priorities in question was, however, much more than a Marxism which, for Grossman, attempted an institutional prohibition of all questioning. It was, in part, a number of changes in conditions that confronted both the Soviet and the Trinidadian Marxist with dilemmas which obliged them to reason about the goods that they pursued. Such dilemmas were absent from O'Connor's career progression, notwithstanding the sexist prejudice that, as MacIntyre emphasizes, she had to overcome.[26] What helped Grossman and James to make rational choices when faced with their personal dilemmas was also what complemented their Marxism as a source of questions, and what gave them external resources with which to put even their Marxism in question. For James, this included a firm family upbringing and a kind of formal education similar to that from which MacIntyre himself benefitted. For both James and Grossman, it also included the practice of an art. Grossman's art was literary, enabling him to pursue truth in an additional way to that of Marxist enquiry. That this should be so, Grossman should have learned from Marxists who were no less anti-Stalinist in art's defence[27] than would be the Trotskyist MacIntyre. What MacIntyre now adds, citing D. H. Lawrence and Oscar Wilde, is that such guidance can be theoretical as well as practical.[28] More practical guidance can be gained from other practices and arts. James benefitted especially from participation in what he (and now, following him, MacIntyre has) called the art of cricket — as a schoolboy and adult player, as a journalistic commentator and, eventually, as a moral critic. For him, as against anyone with an amoral will to win, to cheat was to deny oneself the ability to reason practically.[29] He had been brought up to acknowledge that to break the rules of a shared practice was simply (to use an expression that, in his time, was widely applied) "not cricket".[30]

The British Empire was thought by many of its administrators to have been won on the playing fields of Eton and Rugby public schools. Those bureaucratic managers were taught to be team players and rule followers, not individualists. Beneficiaries of such an ethical education, gained through the practice of play that was taught as a good in itself with the successful aim of building character and cultivating virtue, also populated such elite institutions as T. H. Green's Oxford. There, philosophical reflection on such ethically educative practice led to identification of Aristotle as its theorist, in rejection of utilitarians' means-end morality. Consequently, at the same time that Thomism was revived in Italy, Aristotelianism was revived in Britain and its empire. Whilst James's life was informed by an ethics and a politics that might well seem to have pulled in different directions, MacIntyre's radicalization of Aristotelian practical reasoning aspires to point them toward a common good. The kind of ethic once instilled into those charged with imposing alien institutions upon imperial subjects is a kind of ethic that can also motivate resistance to institutions' corrupting effect, amongst those whose behavior institutions' managers are charged with manipulating.

The morally educative value of practices was famously illustrated in *After Virtue*, in fine Wittgensteinian style, with the hypothetical example of an initially candy-desiring and progressively chess-playing child. She learns to subordinate her untutored desire for candy to a new desire to excel by the standards internal to the practice of chess. As with James's cricketers, MacIntyre's chess player internalizes the game's prohibition of cheating. The good internal to chess, as a shared practice, is incompatible with any means-end rationality that warrants winning at any cost, whether or not one thereby also wins some candy. An institutional point is that if people internalize a common good as a personal aim, it can be more effectively pursued than by deployment of mere sticks or carrots. Even

Stalinists encouraged "socialist emulation". Against Stalinists and others, MacIntyre's general point is that morally educative common goods are goods internal to shared practices; they are not goods imposed by alien institutions. Even so, shared goods may be imposed by necessity and, if they are to be actualized, their pursuit must be institutionalized. As MacIntyre now says of Russia's Great Patriotic War, Grossman and his compatriots shared an "overriding good to which all other goods [had] to be subordinated", exercising their practical reasoning "in solidarity ... with all those engaged in the same enterprise".[31] His sociological and economic claim is that, between the extremity of war and the relative triviality of games, a vast expanse of everyday social life consists of practices and goods to which individuals can similarly devote their reasoning. Where work's institutionalization allows, "primary responsibility for the quality of the end products of the work lies with the workers, who in this respect are ... agents with rational and aesthetic powers, even though their labor is still exploited".[32] His moral claim is that this is beneficial to themselves and to others. His theoretical claim is that Aristotelianism's conceptual scheme articulates what is "expressed in and presupposed by a wide range of activities, responses, and judgments, and this because it ... captures certain truths about human beings, truths that we acknowledge in our everyday practices".[33] His political claim is that "the ethics-of-the-state and the ethics-of-the-market"[34] conflict with this ethics of common goods and shared practices. As in those industrial conflicts which he, alongside the SWP, can still support, justice, courage and truthfulness are required if practices are to resist the corrupting power of modernity's dominant state and corporate institutions.

What then was it that MacIntyre walked away from when he abandoned the British left? Even if he did not dissociate himself from all of the picket lines, it was at least the meetings of those Marxists who talk as though they have a theory and a practice capable of replacing capitalism with an emancipatory and egalitarian socialism. To this extent, his path was the same as that taken by millions of others in the twentieth century, disillusioned by the institutionalized practice of actually existing socialist states and parties. It was also Marxism as a tradition of reasoning that he abandoned. What he did not at all abandon was the questioning of contemporary capitalist social order that he had previously conducted from within that tradition. As he says in recounting the narrative of his own intellectual life, "it was on the basis of Marxist insights into the nature both of morality and of moral philosophy" that he pursued the enquiry into conflicting traditions of moral enquiry that he still pursues now, and he still remains "convinced of the truth and political relevance of Marx's critique of capitalism".[35]

MacIntyre abandoned Marxism as a tradition of practical as well as theoretical reasoning. He judged it to have failed because it was concerned only with institutionalized social relations and not with individuals' goods and desires. If Marxists wished to criticize comrades' moral crimes and irrationalities, they had to look back beyond "the Marxist view of things"[36] for moral views acquired through participation in other practices. To think that one's only responsibility was to emulate Bolshevik practice by effecting revolution and building socialism was to participate in moral error. Even so, he did not walk away from Marxism entirely. In both *After Virtue* and *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* he represents the tradition by reference to persons more than institutions. Stalin was simply bad; Lenin, Trotsky, Serge and James were not. In the USSR, Trotskyism represented socialists' questioning of Stalinism's "moral crimes and irrationalities".[37] For Serge and James, and for himself, Trotsky represented an option that Russia had not taken.

MacIntyre's departure from Marxism differs from that of those who walked into Marxism as middle-class students, only to walk away when building their graduate careers. They, like he, abandoned a theory that reduced all of the dilemmas and conflicts of modernity to a conflict between workers and employers. If they were brought up to cultivate a moral conscience, they could always ease it by espousing liberal causes. To do so would be to have abandoned the kind of questioning in which James and Grossman persisted and in which O'Connor never engaged. If they were to take the dilemmas and conflicts of modern life more seriously, then they could, as MacIntyre has long put it, become Nietzschean. Consistent Nietzscheans, on this view, are those who aspire to reject all moral traditions and exercise their will to domination through modernity's various institutionalized means. With Marxists, MacIntyre still observes capitalism's "opportunities for managerial and professional

careers" and for "extraordinary rewards for those able to set others to work and to appropriate the surplus value of their labor".[38]

With Nietzsche and against many Marxists, MacIntyre observes that claims to a revolutionary theory and practice provide opportunities for "the exercise of power within the group over the group".[39] Such awareness of the moral dangers in a politics of outright opposition to the dominant order also informs his narrative of Denis Faul's political reasoning. Faul was opposed to what he understood as Britain's imperial rule of Northern Ireland at a time when resistance to it moved from the demand for civil rights to the violence of the Provisional Irish Republican Army. He supported both the original demands and the families of those imprisoned as IRA members. For such members, as for the wartime Grossman, "there was a single overriding good to be achieved", whereas "for Father Faul there were a number of different goods to be taken into account" and rationally ordered.[40] As a Catholic priest, Faul's reasoning about politics was relatively free from conflict with the kind of intimate relationships with which Grossman, O'Connor and James had to contend. It was a kind of political reasoning to which MacIntyre was otherwise close, and the philosopher speaks with the priest in condemnation of "the manipulative and deceitful use of power" by the rebels' leaders. That "handful" of leaders who made out of the conflict's settlement grounds for their own successful political careers he condemns "rampant scoundrels".[41]

Revolutionary types of practical reasoning need to be questioned as much as do reformist and conservative styles. They need to be questioned not only about their efficacy in achieving their proposed ends but also about the desirability of those ends, and about their relation to other human goods. Conflicts between goods, including the goods of money, power and status, are forced upon practical reasoners. If no theory can yet guide even the soundest such reasoners beyond the conflicts of modernity to a revolutionary transformation of society, MacIntyre nonetheless proposes Aristotelianism as a type of reasoning capable of pointing to the transformation of desires and selves. On his Aristotelian account, still more than on that of earlier academic Aristotelians, individuals' fulfilment of their human potential is conditional on the transformation of social conditions. In this, his aspirations for both theory and practice remain revolutionary.

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[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, transcribed from the recording of the "Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia" conference held at London Metropolitan University, 29 June to 1 July 2007.

[2] Ibid.. For Callinicos's critique, see Alex Callinicos "Two Cheers for Enlightenment Universalism: Or, Why It's Hard to Be an Aristotelian Revolutionary", in Paul Blackledge & Kelvin Knight edd., *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2011). For historical and intellectual context, see Paul Blackledge, John Gregson, *Marxism, Ethics and Politics: The Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

[3] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Notes from the Moral Wilderness", in Kelvin Knight ed., *The MacIntyre Reader* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 36, 49. Most recently, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 280.

[4] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2007; 3rd edn.), 84.

[5] Jason Blakely, *Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and the Demise of Naturalism: Reunifying Political Theory and Social Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2016), 24-37.

[6] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Some Enlightenment Projects Reconsidered", in *idem, Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[7] Alasdair MacIntyre, "The *Theses on Feuerbach*: A Road Not Taken", in *The MacIntyre Reader*, 225.
[8] *After Virtue*, 52-53.
[9] *After Virtue*, 260.
[10] *After Virtue*, 260.
[11] Thaddeus J. Kozinski, *The Political Problem of Religious Pluralism: And Why Philosophers Can't Solve It* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010); Kelvin Knight, *Freedom's Useful Name: Politics and Philosophy in the Emergence of Human Rights* (forthcoming).
[12] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Marxism: An Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 53.
[13] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Freedom and Revolution", in Paul Blackledge & Neil Davidson edd., *Alasdair MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism: Selected Writings, 1953–1974* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 132.
[14] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods", in *The MacIntyre Reader*.
[15] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 186-187.
[16] Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1967), 241; Kelvin Knight, "Rules, Goods, and Powers", in Ruth Groff & John Greco edd., *Powers and Capacities in Philosophy: The New Aristotelianism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 319, 324.
[17] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.
[18] See, for example, Kelvin Knight, "Introduction", in *The MacIntyre Reader* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 10-27; Ron Beadle, "The Misappropriation of MacIntyre", *Reason in Practice* 2:2 (45-54), 2002; Kelvin Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 124-189; Ron Beadle, "Why Business Cannot Be a Practice", *Analyse & Kritik* 30:1, (227-241), 2008; Kelvin Knight, "Practices: The Aristotelian Concept", *Analyse & Kritik* 30:2 (317-329), 2008; Kelvin Knight, "Revolutionary Aristotelianism", in *Virtue and Politics*; Paul Blackledge, "Alasdair MacIntyre: Social Practices, Marxism and Ethical Anti-Capitalism", Political Studies 57:4 (866–884), 2009; Keith Breen, *Under Weber's Shadow: Modernity, Subjectivity and Politics in Habermas, Arendt and MacIntyre* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 177-188; Ron Beadle & Geoff Moore, "MacIntyre, Neo-Aristotelianism and Organization Theory", *Research in the Sociology of Organisations* 32 (85-121), 2011; Ron Beadle, "Managerial Work in a Practice-Embodying Institution: The Role of Calling, the Virtue of Constancy', *Journal of Business Ethics* 113:4 (679-90), 2013; Geoff Moore, Ron Beadle & Anna Rowlands, "Crowding in Virtue: A MacIntyrean Approach to Business Ethics", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 88:4, (779-805), 2014; Gregory R. Beabout, *The Character of the Manager: From Office Executive to Wise Steward* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Caleb Bernacchio & Robert Couch, "The Virtue of Participatory Governance: A MacIntyrean Alternative to Shareholder Maximisation", *Business Ethics: A European Review* 24: S2 (130-43), 2015; Geoff Moore, *Virtue at Work: Ethics for Individuals, Managers, and Organizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Ron Beadle, "On Running Away to the Circus", Politics & Poetics 4, 2017; Caleb Bernacchio, "Networks of Giving and Receiving in an Organizational Context: *Dependent Rational Animals* and MacIntyrean Business Ethics", *Business Ethics Quarterly* 28:4 (377-400), 2018; Ron Beadle, *Virtuous Circles: What Everyone Could Learn from the Circus* (forthcoming). For a wider literature review, see Ron Beadle, "MacIntyre's Influence on Business Ethics", in Alejo José G. Sison, Gregory R. Beabout & Ignacio Ferrero edd., *Handbook of Virtue Ethics in Business and Management* (New York: Springer, 2017).
[19] A third, lesser institution is the Contemporary Aristotelian Studies "specialist group" of the UK's Political Studies Association. An altogether more ambitious attempt to establish such a group within the American Political Science Association was supported by Ronald Beiner and led by Philip de Mahy.

[20] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Common Goods and Political Reasoning: Proposal for a Research Project to be Sponsored by the Centre for Contemporary Aristotelian Studies in Ethics and Politics at London Metropolitan University*, 2010.
[21] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 165, 171.
[22] *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 176-183. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 142-145.
[23] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 247, 260-261.
[24] *Ibid.*, 266.
[25] *Ibid.*, 272.
[26] *Ibid.*, 265-266, 310.
[27] *Ibid.*, 249-251.
[28] *Ibid.*, 141-150.
[29] *Ibid.*, 288-293.
[30] C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary*, Random House, 2005, 217-254.
[31] *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 253.
[32] *Ibid.*, 131.
[33] *Ibid.*, 201-202.
[34] *Ibid.*, 124.
[35] Alasdair MacIntyre, "On Having Survived the Academic Moral Philosophy of the Twentieth Century", in Fran O'Rourke ed., *What Happened In and To Moral Philosophy in the Twentieth Century?: Philosophical Essays in Honor of Alasdair MacIntyre* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 20.
[36] *Ibid.*, 277.
[37] *Ibid.*, 247.
[38] *Ibid.*, 120.
[39] *Ibid.*, 282. For a defence of Marxism from MacIntyre, see Paul Blackledge, "Through a Glass Darkly: Alasdair MacIntyre, Karl Marx and C.L.R. James", *International Critical Thought* (forthcoming).
[40] *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 306.
[41] *Ibid.*, 307, 309.